AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claims 1- 34 (Canceled)

35. (New) An image compressing apparatus comprising:

a part for performing a pixel thinning-out operation and for compressing image data; and

a part for determining a position of pixels to be thinned by:

first dividing pixels into a plurality of same-size rectangular blocks along a horizontal direction and a vertical direction; and

regularly repeating a first step and a second step alternately, wherein: said first step comprises a step of thinning out pixels located at a right side of a target block when a block located immediately above has pixels thinned out from a left side; and said second step comprises a step of thinning out pixels located at a left side of a target block when a block located immediately above has pixels thinned out from a right side.

36. (New) An image compressing apparatus comprising:

a part for performing a pixel thinning-out operation and for compressing image data; and

a part for determining a position of pixels to be thinned by:

first dividing pixels into a plurality of same-size rectangular blocks along a horizontal direction and a vertical direction; and

regularly repeating a first step and a second step alternately, wherein: said first step comprises a step of thinning out pixels located at an upper side of a target block when a block located immediately left has pixels thinned out from a lower side; and said second step comprises a step of thinning out pixels located at a lower side of a target block when a block located immediately left has pixels thinned out from a left side.

37. (New) The image compressing apparatus as claimed in claim 35, wherein each block comprises a rectangle of 2 by 3 pixels; and

the pixels thinned out from each block comprise a rectangle of 2 by 1 pixels.

38. (New) The image compressing apparatus as claimed in claim 36, wherein:
each block comprises a rectangle of 2 by 3 pixels; and
the pixels thinned out from each block comprise a rectangle of 2 by 1 pixels.

39. (New) The image compressing apparatus as claimed in claim 35, wherein:
each block comprises a rectangle of 3 by 3 pixels; and
the pixels thinned out from each block comprise a rectangle of 3 by 1 pixels.

40. (New) The image compressing apparatus as claimed in claim 36, wherein:
each block comprises a rectangle of 3 by 3 pixels; and
the pixels thinned out from each block comprise a rectangle of 3 by 1 pixels.

41. (New) The image compressing apparatus as claimed in claim 35, wherein:
each block comprises a rectangle of 2 by 4 pixels; and
the pixels thinned out from each block comprise a rectangle of 2 by 2 pixels.

42. (New) The image compressing apparatus as claimed in claim 36, wherein:
each block comprises a rectangle of 2 by 4 pixels; and
the pixels thinned out from each block comprise a rectangle of 2 by 2 pixels.

43. (New) The image compressing apparatus as claimed in claim 35, wherein:
each block comprises a rectangle of 2 by 3 pixels; and
the pixels thinned out from each block comprise a rectangle of 2 by 2 pixels.

44. (New) The image compressing apparatus as claimed in claim 36, wherein:
each block comprises a rectangle of 2 by 3 pixels; and
the pixels thinned out from each block comprise a rectangle of 2 by 2 pixels.

45. (New) An image compressing method comprising the steps of:
a) performing a pixel thinning-out operation and compressing image data; and

b) determining a position of pixels to be thinned by:

first dividing pixels into a plurality of same-size rectangular blocks along a horizontal direction and a vertical direction; and

regularly repeating a first step and a second step alternately, wherein: said first step comprises a step of thinning out pixels located at a right side of a target block when a block located immediately above has pixels thinned out from a left side; and said second step comprises a step of thinning out pixels located at a left side of a target block when a block located immediately above has pixels thinned out from a right side.

46. (New) An image compressing method comprising:

(a) performing a pixel thinning-out operation and compressing image data; and

(b) determining a position of pixels to be thinned by:

first dividing pixels into a plurality of same-size rectangular blocks along a horizontal direction and a vertical direction; and

regularly repeating a first step and a second step alternately, wherein: said first step comprises a step of thinning out pixels located at an upper side of a target block when a block located immediately left has pixels thinned out from a lower side; and said second step comprises a step of thinning out pixels located at a lower side of a target block when a block located immediately left has pixels thinned out from a left side.

47. (New) The image compressing method as claimed in claim 45, wherein:

each block comprises a rectangle of 2 by 3 pixels; and

the pixels thinned out from each block comprise a rectangle of 2 by 1 pixels.

48. (New) The image compressing method as claimed in claim 46, wherein:

each block comprises a rectangle of 2 by 3 pixels; and

the pixels thinned out from each block comprise a rectangle of 2 by 1 pixels.

49. (New) The image compressing method as claimed in claim 45, wherein;

each block comprises a rectangle of 3 by 3 pixels; and

the pixels thinned out from each block comprise a rectangle of 3 by 1 pixels.

50. (New) The image compressing method as claimed in claim 46, wherein:
each block comprises a rectangle of 3 by 3 pixels; and
the pixels thinned out from each block comprise a rectangle of 3 by 1 pixels.

51. (New) The image compressing method as claimed in claim 45, wherein:
each block comprises a rectangle of 2 by 4 pixels; and
the pixels thinned out from each block comprise a rectangle of 2 by 2 pixels.

52. (New) The image compressing method as claimed in claim 46, wherein:
each block comprises a rectangle of 2 by 4 pixels; and
the pixels thinned out from each block comprise a rectangle of 2 by 2 pixels.

53. (New) The image compressing method as claimed in claim 45, wherein:
each block comprises a rectangle of 2 by 3 pixels; and
the pixels thinned out from each block comprise a rectangle of 2 by 2 pixels.

54. (New) The image compressing method as claimed in claim 46, wherein:
each block comprises a rectangle of 2 by 3 pixels; and
the pixels thinned out from each block comprise a rectangle of 2 by 2 pixels.